

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Council of the Faculty of Arts and Science

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday, January 11, 1991

- Present: C.L. Bertrand; R. Sheinin; M. Yates; B. Harris; P. Albert; S. Ruby; F. Stevens; C. White; J. Gavin; P. Widden; M. Brian; E. Preston; G. Kanaan; N. Metallinos; W. Knitter; C. Lévy; R. Kilgour; M. Barlow; G. Sassano; G. Decarie; R. Perigoe; H. Shulman; J. Locke; C. Davis; W. Byers; A. Teffeteller; C. Gray; R. Sharma; M. Poirier; N. Segalowitz; M. Oppenheim; S. Hoecker-Drysdale; G. Newsham; C. Potworowski; S. Lanthier-O'Connor; J. Snyder; K. Clément; B. Leonhardt.
- Guests: C. Solar.
- Regrets: M. Szabo; J. Appleby; D. Shapiro; G. Fisher; G. Auchinachie; M. Armstrong.
- Absent: J. Lightstone; T. Swift; Z. Hamlet; H. McQueen; M. Taylor; G. Bastien; E. Budik; L. Cohen; H. Danakas; J. Drolet; S. Farber; G. Grougrou; J. Gruman; E. Kalantar; P. Richards.

Documents Distributed and Considered at this meeting:

- ASFC 91-1M-A Election/Ratification - Arts and Science Faculty Committees
- ASFC 91-1M-B Discussion of Graduate Review Document
- ASFC 91-1M-C Examinations Task Force - Final Report - March 15, 1989

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:12 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

- 91-1-1 It was moved and seconded (Oppenheim/Segalowitz) that the Agenda be accepted as circulated.

Carried.

### 3. Remarks from the Chair

The Dean wished Council members a very Happy New Year and an official welcome to the "decade of the 90's".

The Dean informed Council that Homecoming '91 would be held on October 4th, 5th and 6th. Last year's event was a greater success than the organizers had anticipated. The Dean quoted from a letter he had received from Ann Vroom, of the Alumni Office, "The Alumni Association is counting on the participation and support of the whole university community to make this year's homecoming the most successful yet." The Dean also mentioned that Ann Vroom in the Alumni Office (3816) would be happy to help departments wishing to participate. Most of last year's Homecoming participants wanted to see their former professors and people from their departments and programs - not the Rector or Dean, which led the Dean to ask departments to think about organizing some celebration around the dates of October 4, 5 and 6.

The Dean also alerted Council that Physical Plant's unionized workers were about to take a strike vote the following Monday. The Vice-Rector, Services would keep the university alerted about measures to be taken in the event of power failures, failure of boilers, etc.

The Dean advised Council that he had asked Arts and Science Budget Manager, Mr. Larry Tansey, to look into the question of formula budgeting for the Faculty of Arts and Science. The Dean would inform the Chairs of this possibility later that month. He suggested that departments might wish to discuss the implications of such a mode of financing at the departmental level, in case it should be implemented. The idea was still in the talking stages but as we were in a situation where it was apparent that the amount of money available would not increase very much, a certain amount of reallocations was going to be necessary and it was important that this be done in the most equitable manner possible.

### 4. Approval of the Minutes of November 30, 1990

91-1-2

It was moved and seconded (Levy/Byers) that the minutes of the meeting of Arts and Science Faculty Council held November 30, 1990, be accepted as circulated.

Carried.

5. Questions and Announcements

Professor Shulman asked if, within the Faculty of Arts and Science, in the Humanities and Social Sciences departments, there was a desire to move departments to one campus, or were there plans to "rationalize" office space by putting people together on one campus as opposed to the two-campus operation now in existence.

Dean Bertrand responded that less than half of our departments presently had a two-campus operation. The Vice Rector, Services, who was in charge of planning had set up a special blue-ribbon committee to look at a strategic space plan for the university. The Dean was not sure of the time limits involved but he imagined it would be for the next 5 to 10 years. He had no exact knowledge of what was discussed by that committee.

Professor Shulman asked if the Dean had been asked to appear by that committee.

Dean Bertrand responded that he had not.

Professor Newsham asked whether the Committee reviewing Continuing Education would present its report to Council for discussion.

Dr. Bertrand responded that the Committee had completed its deliberations and was in the process of preparing a report. The Committee was reviewing not only Continuing Education but also Off-Campus Education and Distance Education. The Committee was established by the Vice Rector, Academic. The Dean said that in the normal course of events the report would go to the Vice Rector, Academic but as Chair of Faculty Council, he would write to the Vice Rector and ask that, when the report became available, Arts and Science Faculty Council be given an opportunity to comment on it before it went to Senate for final approval.

Professor Perigoe asked for clarification on budgeting for celebrations during Homecoming 1991. He wanted to know where departments should send requests for funds to cover costs or wondered whether departments would have to use their own budgets.

Dr. Bertrand suggested that departments start with Ann Vroom in the Alumni Office. In her letter to the Dean she specifically mentioned that the Alumni Office would be glad to help with mailings or advertising. He pointed out that Communication Studies, fortuitously had their 25th anniversary celebrations during Homecoming last year, and had set aside money from their own budget

and had asked other areas in the university to help defray costs. The Dean suggested that other departments could follow this initiative and suggested that the earlier the application for funds from other university areas was made the better chance there was of success. The Dean also suggested that perhaps departments might want to work together on certain events. He also thought that the dates coincided those of Science Week.

Dr. Knitter asked if Limited Term Appointments were eligible for the new and improved book allowance.

Dr. Bertrand responded that Limited Term Appointments were indeed members of the bargaining unit and therefore eligible for the Professional Development Allowance.

Dr. Knitter asked if, in this the 6th year of the Dean's excellent shepherding of the faculty, there were plans to raise the level of travel support. He pointed out that the travel grant had remained the same for the past 6 years in the Faculty of Arts and Science. As a Faculty, Arts and Science had half the faculty members in the university and yet it had the lowest level of support of all the faculties. He pointed out that this year Commerce had raised its level of support to \$1500 for travel. He questioned the Dean's intentions on this issue.

Dr. Bertrand thanked Dr. Knitter for his opening phrase and reminded him that last year Chairs had refused his offer to increase travel allowances at the expense of certain other items in the budget. This was a 0-growth budget year as declared by the Vice Rector, Institutional Relations and Finance which meant that the budget of the faculty remained exactly the same as it was last year. It was also a year in which the new Collective Agreement suddenly presented the Dean with about \$200,000 of unforeseen expenses - the difference between the \$100 book allowance and the new \$350 professional development allowance. He could not therefore change the travel allowance between now and June 1st, 1991 although he agreed that it had remained the same for 6 years. The Dean was quite willing to argue again with the Vice Rector that more money was needed and noted that he was quite willing to shift some money from other areas into that area but cautioned that the shift would mean that spending had to be curtailed in other areas. The Dean felt it would be more productive to have a full discussion of this subject at a meeting of Chairs to see if feelings had changed this year as opposed to last year.

6. Election/Ratification - Arts and Science Faculty Committees

Arts and Science Faculty Council

Ms. Tamara Taylor (ECON & FRAN)

RatifiedArts and Science Committee on General Education

Dr. C. Kalman (PHYS)

Dr. M. Mendell (POLI & SCPA)

AcclaimedBoard of Graduate Studies

Dr. Barbara Woodside (PSYC) - term ends 1992

Dr. Patricia Thornton (GEOG) - term ends June 1, 1991

AcclaimedNOTICE OF ELECTIONArts and Science Faculty Appeal Committee

One (1) full-time faculty member to replace Dr. V. Zeman on sabbatical from January 1, 1991 (terms ends May 31, 1991)

Two (2) undergraduate students to serve as alternates (one-year terms)

Nominations should be sent to Dr. Bertrand's office before February 8, 1991.

7. Discussion of the Document - The Review of the Division of Graduate Studies

Dr. Bertrand informed council that this document had been received at the Senate Committee on Academic Planning and Priorities (SCAPP). One of the decisions of that body was that comments would be solicited from Faculty Councils. Steering Committee thought that Council could begin to discuss the document at this meeting with the intention of moving to the formulation of a motion at the meeting of February 8th with respect to items in the document that related directly to Senate and what Senate must do in order to implement the changes suggested in the document. There were a series of other recommendations that Council was free to comment upon but Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4 and 11 required direct action by the University Senate and Council may wish to comment upon those in particular.



The Dean announced that Council was fortunate to have two members of Steering Committee who were members of the committee that worked long and hard to come to grips with the issue of Graduate Studies at Concordia and they knew something about the making of this document. It was then agreed that the meeting would move into a 'committee of the whole' for an hour and fifteen minutes.

## 8. Examination Reform

Dr. Bertrand stated this item was on the agenda because of concern raised by Council and faculty professors about the university's timetable, especially with regard to the lack of time before the end of classes and the beginning of the examination period. He informed Council that Steering Committee had requested Dr. Hoecker-Drysdale to elaborate on the details of the issue.

Dr. Hoecker-Drysdale made reference to the *Examinations Task Force Final Report and* remarked that while the report had been completed and was in hand, the problems surrounding scheduling and particularly the question of final examinations had not been solved. She referred to the recent Christmas break which she felt was inadequate for faculty as well as for students. She suggested that discussions be revived on the topic. Her own area of concern was the length and general nature of the examination period. She wanted faculty to address this issue in a self-conscious way bearing in mind what the role of each faculty member was in shaping their examinations and their own examination procedures.

She noted that the Task Force's report stated that most final exams were given in the first third or first half of the examination period with very few exams given during the last half of the exam period. She wanted to know why then was there such a long exam period. Even of greater concern to her was the absence of any study period prior to the start of exams. Students were being asked to begin exams the day after the make-up day which was the day after the end of classes. She then posed a number of questions for Council members to consider:

How seriously did faculty take this matter of exams?

What was the meaning of the examination period?

How important were final exams?

Were faculty loading final exams allocating as much as 70% of the grade to them or were they not putting much emphasis on final exams?

Was far too much administrative time and space being invested in the whole examination process?

Was a 3-hour final examination really necessary or would a 2-hour period be

more appropriate?

Should we only be giving one exam for the course?

She felt that these were pedagogical questions which should be looked at. She suggested that the exam function in courses be reappraised while keeping in mind that the exam was indeed part of the course. She suggested a full discussion of the issue with the object of coming up with some recommendations to make the whole process more meaningful.

Dr. Sassano mentioned the practical aspect of correcting final exams within the short period of time allotted. Sometimes he had courses with 100-110 students which meant that he was faced with 200-220 exams to be corrected in 7 days. He calculated that if 30 minutes were allotted to each exam, 16-20 exams could be corrected in any given day. At this rate 20 days would be required to correct the exams in these large courses. In addition there was Christmas to be celebrated. His exams were always scheduled on the 18th of December and with lectures started on January 3rd this year, he wondered about the wisdom of such scheduling.

Dr. Levy asked whether it was correct that the university term must consist of 13 weeks of lectures and 2 weeks of exams - a 15-week term.

Mr. Martin responded that this was so.

Dean Bertrand asked if it had to be 13 weeks of lectures and 2 weeks of examinations.

Mr. Martin responded that we must have a 15 week term.

Dr. Levy asked if we could not have 13 weeks of teaching, 1 week of study and 1 week of exams? The exams to be two hours, administered during regular teaching hours.

Mr. Leonhardt pointed to some of the administrative and human resource problems connected with the present system. Students had their time allotted, in addition, classrooms were allotted for certain hours, usually 2 hour periods; the imposition of a 3 hour period required that whole rearrangements of time and space scheduling occur, leading to an enormous strain on the university's resources, and on the student's resources as well because they were obliged to find time to get to these exams during their working schedules. It would be more convenient if exams could be the length of the time already allotted for courses and held at the same time and in the same classroom during the week following the end of classes. If such a proposal were adopted there would be practically no drain on university resources, very little drain on the

professor and certainly not much drain on the students.

Mr. Martin explained some of the difficulties which the Registrar's area faced with scheduling. They needed to have two full weeks of exams and three weekends in order to produce a relatively conflict-free examination schedule. Exams were scheduled according to term time slots. If a student took a course on a Monday at 9:00 a.m. then the final exam for that course would be scheduled on a Monday morning. Because there was also a 10:15 course on Monday mornings that exam must be scheduled for the following Monday morning during the examination period. At Concordia there was also the phenomenon, not prevalent in other North American universities, of common examinations. These were primarily in the Faculties of Commerce and Administration but there were some common examinations in Arts and Science. Courses with multiple sections that had a common examination had to be administered out of the time sequence already mentioned and these exams were scheduled on the weekend. Friday night, Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon were primarily used for these. Occasionally these were scheduled on Thursday night, but not usually. The Registrar's office needed three weekends to cope with the volume of common exams. With regard to the issue of 2 hour exams over 3 hour exams, this institution had a tradition of 3 hour examinations and the whole exam scheduling was done around that idea. An individual professor who wished to schedule a 2 hour exam instead of a 3 hour could be accommodated but the exam must remain on a 3 hour blocks to accommodate the rest. This year, classes started on Thursday, 3rd of January, so that a full 13 weeks of classes could be accommodated, which meant classes would end on a Wednesday. The Thursday of that week would be the study or make-up day and examinations would start on the Friday so that 3 weekends could be utilized.

If exams were delayed for a week it would mean that everything else had to be delayed. Exams would end 1 week later, on May 6 or 7. The problems with such a delay would be multiple. Many students had employment commitments beginning on May 1. Students from out of town or International students wanted Convocation as early as possible so that they could return to their homes as early as possible. Dr. Sassano mentioned another kind of problem. Grades had to be submitted 7 days after a written examination and in the Spring, the deadline was 3 days after the exams for potential graduates. Mr. Martin confirmed that the deadline was unreasonable, the longer the examination period, the more problems would be encountered getting grades in for Convocation, bearing in mind that winners lists must be compiled and graduation lists prepared for Faculty Council and Senate. There was also the need to inform students ahead of time about arrangements to be made for gowns, etc. There were a whole series of constraints that had to be dealt



with. Within that context, there was very little that could change.

Mr. Martin informed Council that McGill University had 2 hour exam blocks but they had 4 blocks per day which meant that there were students who had to write two exams in one day with another exam the following day. The Examinations Office tried to avoid such situations but the more exams were compacted the more chance there was of students having to write one exam after another. From the Registrar's Office point of view, there was not much beyond fine tuning that could be done about the situation. He agreed that statistics indicated that exams were front-end loaded towards the beginning of the exam period but students preferred to finish the term early so that they could get out to work as soon as possible. In addition, the later the exam was placed on the exam schedule the more pressure there was on professors to get the grades in. If an exam was held at the beginning of the exam period, even though the grades were supposed to be submitted 7 and/or 3 days after the exam, the real urgency did not begin until the exam cycle was over.

Dr. Hoecker-Drysdale responded that while she appreciated all the administrative complexities, the problems as described by Mr. Martin occurred within the present system. Her interest as an academic was in a discussion of the entire matter of examinations so that faculty could begin to think creatively about a different system rather than the one currently in place. The present system was not working and faculty were increasingly getting around the system. Exams were being given within the last 8 days of the end of term; assignments were shaped in various ways to get around the regulations and one of the consequences was that it affected not only the particular course in which this was being done but also the student's ability to deal with all the other courses being taken. There were other options to be considered, such as having a study period of 1-week followed by 1-week in which classes convened during which final exams could be given. Many universities follow such a model. In Departments such as Mathematics and Statistics where common exams were necessary, there must be some way in which these could be arranged. There were other ways of organizing exams other than the way in which it was done presently and Dr. Hoecker-Drysdale wanted a full discussion of the issue.

Dr. Levy asked if there were any statistics on how many courses had final exams and how many did not have final exams.

Mr. Martin responded that he was not sure if those statistics were available at present but he knew that they were readily obtainable should Faculty Council need them.

Professor Shulman asked why there was a week's break in February. Many students did not come back the following week. It also made it hard to get back into the same teaching rhythm and he felt that what was lost was not worth what was gained. He felt that the return to class on a Thursday as happened in January was a complete waste of time because of the number of student absences. To maintain a 13 week semester, only 12 weeks of effective teaching was realized. He felt that Dr. Levy's suggestion was logical and wondered if it would not work.

Mr. Martin reminded Council that prior to 1981 there was no study week in February. Students took the recommendation to Senate and the Registrar, who at the time was Mr Ken Adams, prepared extensive studies of what the major impact of this proposal would be. The conclusion was that it would create a situation where there would not be very many days available in most years between the end of classes and the beginning of exams. The Registrar was against it. Senate never-the-less approved it. It was reviewed three years later with the same debate and the same conclusion. It came up again in 1987 with the same debate and same the conclusion. That was why one of the recommendations of The Task Force was that if in fact people felt that having days between the end of classes and the start of exams was important that week in February was the only time where the schedule would permit it.

Dr. Widden said that he agreed with Professor Shulman. It seemed ridiculous to have a study week in February and then not have any time for students to study between the end of classes and the beginning of exams. Dr. Widden pointed out that to go to a 2-hour exam format the whole university - every professor - would have to agree to shorten exams to 2-hours for the system to be changed.

Mr. Martin agreed that the shortening of exams to 2-hours would have to be a university-wide decision. Mr. Martin also felt that the Commerce and Administration and the Engineering and Computer Science faculties would not agree to shorten final exams to 2-hours.

Dr. Newsham suggested that the 8:30 p.m. slot be given to those who wanted a 3-hour final exam. She supported the idea of having final exams invigilated by the professor of the course and such final exam to be held during the 15th week of classes. She felt that students were more comfortable in familiar surroundings and in smaller classrooms.

Dr. Gray commented that he would have to rethink the idea of 3-hour exams which he had always given. Final examinations for courses that were taught twice a week could also be given during the 15th week of classes. Part 1

could be given during the first lecture of the week and Part 2 could be given during the second lecture of the week. Another advantage to this would be that students and faculty would be less inclined to group all their courses on two days of the week. If students found that their final exams were also to be packed into two days a week it would encourage them to spread their courses out during the full week.

Dr. Sassano wondered if it would be feasible to increase the lecture time during the day from 1 hour and 15 minutes to 2 hours as in the evening section.

Dr. Bertrand responded that it would probably be possible but that the number of courses offered might have to be reduced which of course might not be a bad thing.

Dr. Decarie stated that teachers all over the world in almost every discipline examined students by means of a written examination at the end of the course. He could not believe that all disciplines were so uniform in their demands that there was only one way to do it. He suggested that the reason for written examinations was simply that it was the most convenient method of assessment for the instructor to use. It seemed to him that what teachers were asking for here, was not only that convenience but also a scheduling system with extremely limited possibilities for flexibility. He suggested that our Learning and Development Office would have suggestions about the variety of ways in which students could be examined and suggested that we should look at that.

Dr. Bertrand summed up the discussion by pointing out that Dr. Hoecker-Drysdale's focus was on an academic discussion relating to what examinations were for and about. He sensed from Mr. Martin's remarks that was not looked at by the Task Force, nor was it part of their mandate. He suggested that Council members might examine the relationship of final examinations to what was done in the other 13 weeks of term. He thought that this would be a good place to pick up the discussion the next time. We would have to ask Faculty Council to make any recommendation for change to Senate. We would have to couch recommendations in those terms if we were to have any hope at all of convincing the Faculty of Commerce and Administration or the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science representatives, that respectable results could still be achieved without a 3-hour exam which seems to be an "idée fixe" in certain areas. He suggested that the issue be left at this point and Steering Committee would bring it back to Council if they so decided.

9. Other Business

No other business was raised.

10. Time and Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held Friday, February 8, 1991, at 2:00 p.m.

11. Adjournment

91-1-3 It was moved (Oppenheim/Barlow) that the meeting be adjourned at 4:00 p.m.